

PLACE OF TRADITIONAL ROLES

Whether or not they were in paid employment, most women were still expected to be responsible for the domestic tasks at home. This now included coping with the scarcity of goods and greater management of the family finances if their menfolk were away. In addition, even though the government actively encouraged more women to join the workforce, they had to overcome hurdles:

- Some newspapers initially ridiculed women who took on factory work.
- Some trade unions protested against women taking on other traditionally male jobs.
- Many men feared that the employment of women would lead to a reduction in men's wages.
- Sections within the Catholic Church warned against the consequences of women's new opportunities.
- Women were often admitted reluctantly to the armed services and denied the more interesting jobs.

In traditionally female industries, women were paid 54 per cent of the basic male rate. But in 1942, the new Women's Employment Board set wages for women going into traditionally male jobs, where there was no existing female pay rate, at 70–90 per cent of the male rate.

AUSTRALIA UNDER ATTACK

BOMBING OF DARWIN

On 19 February 1942, just four days after the fall of Singapore, Japanese aircraft attacked Darwin. In the two raids, the airfield was almost wiped out, twenty-three Australian and US aircraft were destroyed and both Australian and US ships were sunk. Approximately 250 military and civilian personnel were killed (although the government initially understated this number). Japan wanted to prevent Darwin being used as a base for attacks on Japanese-held territory to Darwin's north. Another sixty-two air raids were made on Darwin, the last one being in November 1943. There were also raids on some other locations in Australia's north.

SUBMARINE ATTACKS ON SYDNEY

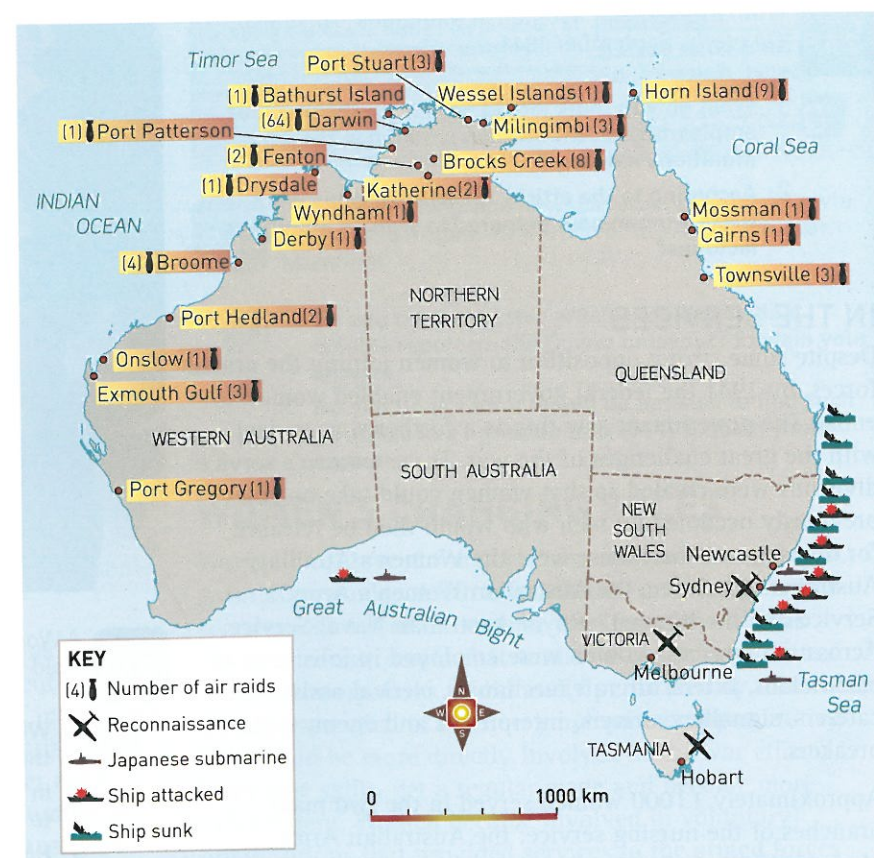
On the night of 31 May 1942, Japanese midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour with the intention of sinking Australian and US warships. These were not hit, but the naval depot ship HMAS *Kuttabul* was sunk with the loss of twenty-one lives. On 8 June, the larger submarines that had launched the midget submarines returned, surfaced and fired shells over Sydney's eastern suburbs and Newcastle. This resulted in little damage and no casualties.

OTHER SUBMARINE ATTACKS

Japanese submarines attacked shipping off the east coast of Australia in 1942 and 1943 to disrupt the supply route from Sydney to New Guinea (see Source 2.6.7). In May 1943, the hospital ship AHS *Centaur*, was attacked and was one of twenty ships sunk along the eastern Australian coast by Japanese submarines. The attack resulted in the loss of 268 lives and the event fuelled racial hatred against the Japanese.

REACTIONS

Most Australians believed that the Japanese bombing raids and submarine attacks were in preparation for an invasion of Australia. This led to periods of panic and fear. It has come to light that in late 1941 Japan did have plans to invade Australia, but that by April 1942 those plans had been abandoned. Evidence indicates that Prime Minister Curtin became aware of the change in Japanese thinking. Yet he did not publicly dismiss the general belief that invasion was possible, so as to ensure the continued hard work and commitment needed from everybody for final victory. The government's Department of Home Security was preparing the people for a possible invasion. Cities were subject to blackout restrictions and air-raid precautions included practising evacuation drills, digging shelters and protecting buildings with sandbags. Barbed wire was placed on beaches to obstruct Japanese landing forces.



SOURCE 2.6.7 Map of attacks on Australia and reconnaissance by the Japanese, 1942–43

'INVADED' BY AMERICANS

From late December 1941 through to the end of the war, almost 1 million US servicemen were stationed for short periods in Australia. They used Australia as an official base before they moved on to fight the Japanese forces in the South-West Pacific; they also returned from this theatre of war for brief recreation leave breaks.

US servicemen showed Australians a different way of life and brought about change in aspects of Australian society and culture. They were well-paid, their uniforms were more stylish, they were generally easygoing and self-confident, and they expected to have American-style food, forms of entertainment and consumer goods. They made US music such as jazz and 'swing' popular and they introduced new dance crazes, such as the jitterbug. They greatly appealed to many Australian young women whom they impressed with wartime luxuries such as silk stockings, chocolates and black market beer and cigarettes. It is estimated that between 12 000 and 15 000 Australian women became 'war brides'; that is, they married US servicemen and went to live in the United States after the war.

THE BATTLE OF BRISBANE

For some of the reasons just outlined, visiting US servicemen were resented by Australian servicemen and parts of the civilian population who complained about them being 'over-paid, over-sexed and over here'. Simmering tensions developed between Australian and US servicemen, which occasionally led to serious violence. On 26 and 27 November 1942, a major riot erupted in Brisbane where by now most Americans were stationed. The Battle of Brisbane left one Australian soldier dead and hundreds on both sides injured, some seriously. Other riots occurred in Melbourne and Perth.

END OF THE WAR

The end of the war in Europe was of course important for Australians. However, the end of the Asia-Pacific war was greeted even more enthusiastically: many more Australian service personnel were now safe from further action and men and women would hopefully return to their previous lives back home. Returning enlisted men and women to Australia was a huge operation, as it was at the end of World War I. Over 450 000 service personnel had been discharged from the armed forces, or **demobilised**, by June 1946. The repatriation of prisoners of war in Australia to Japan, Germany and Italy could now also occur.

At war's end, whether or not they wanted to or could afford it, most civilian and servicewomen had little choice but to return to traditional forms of women's work. This was in line with the government's strategy of settling ex-servicemen back into their former jobs and its new 'populate or perish' policy, which aimed to greatly increase Australia's population. Women had reverted to simply being seen as wives and mothers.

BRISBANE DISTURBANCE

BRISBANE, November 26.—Six servicemen were shot, one fatally, a civilian wounded by bullet fire, and two other soldiers injured when servicemen rioted at the corner of Creek and Adelaide-street, City, to-night.

The disturbance began when military police attempted to take a soldier in charge. Other soldiers are alleged to have interfered, and they claimed that one of their number was struck with a baton. The soldiers tried to force an entry into a canteen. Police were called from all stations and off leave, and the Commissioner of Police took charge.

The shooting occurred when soldiers rushed military police, carrying riot guns and rifles, while they were on duty outside a canteen.

The casualties were, in addition to

SOURCE 2.6.8 From the front page of the *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 27 November 1942. Held at the National Library of Australia

- Q 1 What information is provided about the roles of Australian and US soldiers in the riot?
- 2 Do you think this article would have provided an accurate account of the riot? Give reasons for your answer.



SOURCE 2.6.9 This image came to represent the joy felt by Australians at the end of World War II and the hope for a new future. Footage was taken of the 'dancing man' on 15 August 1945 after he was asked to dance for a newsreel story. His identity is still debated.